

## **Turnaround Leadership for School Success (TLSS)**

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### **Executive Summary**

The University of New Mexico (UNM, including the Anderson School of Management) is responding to the New Mexico Public Education Department's Request for Application in NMLead, in partnership with New Mexico State University (NMSU, including the Business School), Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS), New Mexico School Leadership Institute (NMSLI), and The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation (WWNFF). This partnership will create a state-wide program to train principals with the skills and competencies to turn around New Mexico's low-performing schools. Over the life of the grant three cohorts will be rigorously selected, trained, and coached in turnaround leadership. Each cohort of aspiring school leaders will attend two intensive classes, one weekend per month over two consecutive semesters, and in the third semester each will be placed in a full-time residency/internship, in an appropriate school with a high-performing principal. At the end of the program, principal preparation graduates will continue to receive job-embedded mentoring and support in site visits from a leadership coach, who will use the turnaround curriculum to further develop the leadership capacities of the candidates as they move into the principalship. By the end of the TLSS program, candidates who have completed the training will be eligible for New Mexico licensure in school administration.

## 1. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Turnaround Leadership for School Success initiative creates a pathway to build much needed leadership capacity throughout New Mexico. The UNM-NMSL-LCPS-NMSLI-WWNFF partnership will deliver a comprehensive, rigorous program for aspiring principals built on four clusters of Turnaround Competencies: driving for results, influencing for results, problem solving, and showing the confidence to lead<sup>1</sup>.

Each cohort of selected principal candidates will participate in two years of training, coaching, and support. Partnering institutions of higher education will offer credit to participants which will apply toward an Advanced Graduate Program Certificate should the candidates choose to access this opportunity. Spring, summer, and fall courses, will be co-taught by a Las Cruces Public Schools principal practitioner (each with Darden-Curry turnaround training and unambiguous evidence of turnaround success in their own schools) and a faculty member from the UNM Anderson School of Management/College of Education or from NMSU College of Education or School of Business. These courses will be exclusive for program participants. Additionally, a second year of coaching will be made available to these turnaround leaders for a total of two years of implementation support and mentoring.

Beginning fall 2014, we will recruit the first cohort of aspiring principals to participate in turnaround leadership preparation. The track for aspiring principal coursework will begin in spring semester with advanced leadership preparation in organizational/systems change and instructional leadership. During the summer, the cohort will attend intensive, four weeks of

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<sup>1</sup> Public Impact. (2008). *School turnaround leaders: Competencies for success*. Retrieved from: <http://publicimpact.com/teacehrs-leaders/competencies-of-high-performers>.

coursework in school finance, budgeting, and legal issues in education. Then in spring semester, aspiring principals will experience a full-semester residency in a high-needs school with an experienced, highly successful mentoring principal. Their final course in the program will address using data to inform leadership decisions. Candidates will receive job-embedded mentoring and support in site visits from a Leadership Coach who will use the turnaround curriculum to further develop their leadership capacities. By the end of their coursework and residency, candidates will exceed New Mexico's requirements for administrative licensure.

Our logic model has four main program goals that tie directly to the major factors that affect turnaround success: (1) Improve the recruitment and selection of aspiring principals for turnaround leadership, (2) Focus the preparation for aspiring principals on turnaround leadership, (3) Provide systemic support for turnaround leaders, and (4) Evaluate, research and disseminate outcomes data.

The pending retirement of aging teachers and administrators coupled with accountability requirements have exacerbated a shortage of high quality school leaders, especially those willing to serve as principals in low-performing schools. Aspiring principals will be engaged in a structured, purposeful study of strategies for improving teaching and learning. With the built-in support structure of a Turnaround Coach and the small, but meaningful size of the cohort, the TLSS project aims to ensure that learning communities are strengthened and dramatic and meaningful student achievement gains realized at their school sites. Not only will the TLSS project expand professional learning and action to include turnaround success, but the project will strengthen the district office structure and solidify systemic improvement to support principal leadership development.

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### **1. ABSTRACT: SUMMARY OF THE PROGRAM TRAINING MODEL**

The University of New Mexico (UNM, including the Anderson School of Management) is responding to the New Mexico Public Education Department's Request for Application in NMLead, in partnership with New Mexico State University (NMSU, including the Business School), Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS), New Mexico School Leadership Institute (NMSLI), and The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation (WWNFF). This partnership will create a state-wide program to train principals with the skills and competencies to turn around New Mexico's low-performing schools. Over the life of the grant three cohorts will be rigorously selected, trained, and coached in turnaround. Each cohort of aspiring school leaders will attend two intensive classes, one weekend per month over two consecutive semesters, and in the third semester each will be placed in a full-time residency/internship, in a school with a high performing principal. At the end of the program, principal preparation graduates will continue to receive job-embedded mentoring and support in site visits from a leadership coach, who will use the turnaround curriculum to further develop the leadership capacities of the candidates as they move into the principalship. By the end of the program, the aspiring principals will be eligible for New Mexico licensure in school administration.

## **2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

School leaders must make a clear commitment to dramatic change from the status quo and signal the magnitude and urgency of those changes. The Turnaround Leadership for School Success initiative creates a pathway to build much needed leadership capacity throughout New Mexico. The UNM-NMSL-LCPS-NMSLI-WWNFF partnership will deliver a comprehensive, rigorous program for aspiring principals built on four clusters of Turnaround Competencies: driving for results, influencing for results, problem solving and showing the confidence to lead.

Each cohort of selected principal candidates will participate in two years of training, coaching, and support. Partnering institutions of higher education will offer credit to participants which will apply toward an Advanced Graduate Program Certificate should the candidates choose to access this opportunity. Spring, as well as summer and spring courses, will be co-taught by a Las Cruces Public Schools principal practitioner (each with Darden-Curry turnaround training and unambiguous evidence of turnaround success in their own schools) and a UNM/NMSU faculty member (either from Anderson School of Management or NMSU School of Business). These courses will be exclusive for program participants. In addition, a further year of coaching will be available to these turnaround leaders for a total of two years of implementation support and mentoring.

Beginning fall 2014, we will recruit the first cohort of aspiring principals to participate in turnaround leadership preparation. The track for aspiring principal coursework will begin in spring semester with advanced leadership preparation in organizational/systems change and

instructional leadership. During the summer, the cohort will attend intensive, four weeks of coursework in school finance, budgeting and legal issues in education. Then in spring semester, aspiring principals will experience a full-semester residency in a high-needs school with an experienced, highly successful mentoring principal. Their final course in the program will be data-informed leadership. They will receive job-embedded mentoring and support in site visits from a Leadership Coach who will use the turnaround curriculum to further develop their leadership capacities. By the end of their coursework and residency, candidates will exceed New Mexico requirements for administrative licensure.

“Two major factors affect turnaround success: the characteristics and actions of the turnaround leader, and the support for dramatic change that the leader and staff receive from the district, state, and/or other governing authority. Although leadership accounts for 25 percent of school effects in most schools, in a turnaround the leader is paramount. It is almost unheard of for turnarounds to occur without a special breed of leader at the helm — one who engages and focuses the whole community on achieving dramatic improvement goals fast”.<sup>2</sup>

Our logic model has four main program goals that tie directly to the major factors that affect turnaround success: (1) Improve the recruitment and selection of aspiring principals for turnaround leadership, (2) Focus the preparation for aspiring principals on turnaround leadership, (3) Provide systemic support for turnaround leaders, and (4) Evaluate, research and disseminate outcomes data.

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<sup>2</sup> Steiner, L., & Hassel, E. A. (Public Impact). (2011). *Using competencies to improve school turnaround principal success*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia’s Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education. Retrieved from [www.DardenCurry.org](http://www.DardenCurry.org).

(3) Improve Recruitment and Selection of Aspiring Principals for Turnaround Leadership -

Objectives/Activities and Outcomes/Measures: UNM-NMSU-LCPS-NMSLI-WWNFF

will conduct a rigorous selection process to identify candidates with the characteristics of leaders likely to succeed in the unique context of school turnaround. Selection of aspiring principals will be as follows:

- Selection Criteria: Applicants must hold a Level III teaching license, have six years teaching experience, have principal/supervisor recommendations and demonstrated leadership skills. Once the applicants are screened and meet the first round of qualifications, they take the *Principal Insight* survey (Gallup, Inc.) and participate in a personal interview. *Principal Insight* is an instrument to assess the dispositions needed for effective principals and helps identify important qualities for potential school principals such as positive motivation, relationship building, and the ability to impact student learning. The data from all selection criteria will then be compiled and the applicants with the highest scores will be admitted into the Aspiring Principal cohort.
- The UNM-NMSU-LCPS-NMSLI-WWNFF partnership will use the *Principal Insight* and personal interviews to identify patterns of thinking, feeling, acting, and speaking, i.e. competencies that leaders need to execute a successful school turnaround. Rather than asking aspiring principals to self-select into the program or tapping popular candidates, we will be purposefully selecting candidates with the requisite

competencies for turnaround leadership. Furthermore, we will collect performance data and revise the Principal Insight throughout the course of the program.

- Outcomes and Measures: We will recruit, train and support a total of three cohorts of highly qualified aspiring principals.

(4) Focus Preparation for Aspiring Principals on Advancing Competencies for Turnaround

Leadership - Objectives/Activities and Outcomes/Measures: Our turnaround leadership training is focused on teaching principal candidates how to take action on the four clusters of Turnaround Competencies: driving for results, influencing for results, problem solving and showing confidence to lead.<sup>3</sup> Once we have selected principal candidates our coursework becomes focused on building skills and depth of knowledge in this type of intense instructional leadership. All course assignments will be field-based application of turnaround skills and knowledge.

- Classes: The program includes 21 to 24 credit hours of required coursework, including a leadership residency/internship and job-embedded turnaround work in high-need schools.
- Experiences: Key elements of the program for turnaround leadership are the extended internship for aspiring principals. This rigorous and practical, school-based experience will fully prepare candidates to be turnaround practitioners in high-need

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**Public Impact. (2008). *School turnaround leaders: Competencies for success*. Retrieved from: <http://publicimpact.com/teachers-leaders/competencies-of-high-performers>**



schools and able to assess, mobilize and support turnaround conditions for school improvement.

(5) Provide Systemic Support for Turnaround Leaders - Objectives/Activities and

Outcomes/Measures: TLSS participants will benefit from the support, knowledge and expertise of management/business and college of education university faculty, the New Mexico School Leadership Institute, successful principal practitioners, and a Turnaround Coach.

- UNM: Courses will leverage expertise from both the UNM Anderson School of Management and College of Education.
- NMSU: Courses will leverage expertise from both the NMSU School of Business and College of Education.
- LCPS: Courses will leverage the expertise from principals trained in school turnaround and success in having turned around low-performing schools in Las Cruces Public Schools.
- NMSLI: Work will provide ongoing professional development and customized training modules in response to needs of cohort participants and their districts.
- Support for participants will include a newly hired, highly specialized and experienced Turnaround Coach. The Turnaround Coach will work with turnaround mentor principals to provide rapid feedback and guidance about improvement. Aspiring principals will continue their learning through inquiry, feedback and reflection with the Turnaround Coach. The Turnaround Coach will support strategies

for school improvement, implementation tactics and adjustments, and will participate in site visits, trouble-shooting, problem solving, and goal setting. One of the four key actions of turnaround leaders (tied to problem-solving) is data analysis and creating action plans based on data.

- Outcomes and Measures: 100% of Turnaround Aspiring Principals at chronically underperforming school sites will receive coaching and support from the Turnaround Coach. 100% of aspiring principals will be matched with peer mentors. Post grant, the Turnaround Coach will continue to deploy cadres of turnaround principals to chronically underperforming schools.

(6) Evaluate, Research and Disseminate - Objectives/Activities and Outcomes/Measures:

The UNM-NMSU-LCPS-NMSLI-NMSLI-WWNFF partnership will conduct continuous feedback assessments, evaluation and research for dissemination of program outcomes, specifically the impact of selecting, training and supporting turnaround leaders.

- Performance Measures
  - All aspiring principal graduates will complete state licensure requirements and obtain an administrative license.
  - All aspiring principals will be hired as principals or assistant principals by NM schools.
  - Aspiring principals hired as principals or assistant principals will remain in a leadership position for at least two years.

- TLSS program graduates will demonstrate fundamental change at their school sites based on pre- and post-program school grade points from the New Mexico Public Education Department, which includes student achievement growth measures.
- By the end of the grant period, 80% of program graduates will be rated “effective” or “highly effective” as measured by the New Mexico Public Education Department principal evaluation system approved by the U.S. Department of Education.
- Professional Development Modules: NMSLI and the Turnaround Coach will develop a knowledge base, professional development modules and protocols that will identify ways in which district leaders statewide can support turnaround principals and skills for turnaround leaders that improve student achievement.

(8) Implementation and Support for Principal Leadership: The preparation and training for school principals must be standards-focused, intellectually rigorous, job-embedded, and sustainable. Additionally, the components of current education reform—standards, assessments, curriculum innovations, and professional development—are too often applied without consideration of the context—or systems—in which they are expected to effect change. Implementation of any reform initiative will not achieve success or large scale change unless there are concurrent efforts to change district systems and supports.

(9) (1) Rigorous Selection: Selection of 10-participant cohort groups will be a collaborative effort between all partners— UNM, NMSU, LCPS, NMSLI and WWNFF. Traditionally, candidates for leadership development programs are self-selected, which is a non-strategy for recruitment that provides no control over quality, dispositions, or potential. However, the targeted recruitment and selection of participants in the TLSS program has an established, strong foundation for considering multiple measures to assess potential, mastery of skills and predispositions relative to school leadership.

(10) (2) Comprehensive Training and Job-Embedded/Site-Based Experiences:

Courses will pull from four nationally recognized colleges and be co-taught by Las Cruces district principal leaders and faculty from the UNM College of Education and the Anderson School of Management, together with the NMSU College of Education and the School of Business. Field work will be supervised and supported by district and university personnel. To support aspiring principals during their residency at high-need schools, they will be supported by a District Mentor Principal and the district will provide a teacher for the candidate's classroom during the one-semester professional development sabbatical. In return, candidates will commit to seeking turnaround leadership roles and remaining with the district for at least two years. Internships will be completed at high-need schools, especially priority and focus schools, to emphasize leadership responsibilities for creating conditions for assessing data, improving practice and student achievement. To support turnaround principals as they study, identify, plan, and apply practices in their own schools, they will be supported by a their Mentor

Principal and it is anticipated that cohort reflection will result in thoughtful examination of implementation strategies that result in improved student learning.

(11) (3) Systemic and Ongoing Coaching, Mentoring and Professional Development:

Too often the immediacy of survival needs overshadow the issues of quality instruction and academic excellence. A support system has been constructed to strengthen participant focus on turnaround work and to motivate attention and effort beyond school management issues—budget, staffing, safety plans, labor relations, facilities management, district reporting, compliance, and state issues. In addition to providing ongoing professional development, NMSLI will provide training for principal mentors. TLSS will support participants with a Turnaround Coach, a district Mentor Principal, in-kind support from Peer Mentors, MP stipends and tuition support. Mentors must have the recommendation of a Superintendent and will be selected based on the following criteria: at least three years of experience as an district principal; demonstrated skills in collaboration, reflection, communications, instructional leadership, conflict resolution, time management, team building, and a commitment to mentoring. Their responsibilities will begin with the development of a partnership agreement to define mentoring details, goals, schedules, shared training experiences, feedback plans, and terms of confidentiality. The opportunity to share professional experiences and articulate practices to peers is a form of professional development support that enables a principal to move from intuitive to intentional practice.

(12) (4) Evaluation, Research and Dissemination: At the end of the preparation program, all participants will be assessed based on NM State Competencies for Principals

as prescribed by the state, including the development, implementation, and reflection in a Personal Development Plan. Additional assessment of activities will include feedback and reflection from regularly scheduled meetings, surveys and interviews regarding the content and effects of the program. Those completing the program will also participate in an evaluation that will provide critical data for revisions and improvements in the preparation program. The School Leadership and Preparation and Practice Survey (SLPPS, from the Utah Education Policy Center) will produce feedback on program features, leadership practices, school improvement efforts, and student learning outcomes.

(13) Contributions to the Field: Selecting and Preparing Highly Effective Principals:

In recent years, societal trends have intersected to create a new and dramatic need in schools. Specifically, the pending retirement of aging teachers and administrators coupled with accountability requirements have exacerbated a shortage of high quality school leaders, especially those willing to serve as principals. New principals, assistant principals and experienced peers will be engaged in a structured, purposeful study of strategies for improving teaching and learning. As experienced principals grapple with the challenges in chronically underperforming schools, new principals are seeking advanced studies and preparation to help turnaround their schools. Limiting the turnaround cohort size will ensure appropriate district level support and foster the sharing of their best turnaround ideas and implementation strategies. With the built-in support structure of a Turnaround Coach and the small, but meaningful size of the cohort, the project aims to ensure that learning communities are strengthened and student

achievement gains can be attained at their school sites. Not only will the TLSS project expand training to include turnaround success, but the project will strengthen the district office structure and solidify systemic improvement to support principal leadership development. The significance of the TLSS is that of its direct attention to improving selection, training, and supporting principals in order to improve their practice which will in turn result in better instruction and greater gains in student achievement.

(8)Traditionally, classroom teachers have been the primary candidates for principalship, but most are “self-selected,” a non-strategy for recruitment that provides no control over the quality, dispositions, or leadership potential. Licensure programs for such candidates are often suspected of lacking in rigor, and those who self-select and then accept a principal’s position typically choose not to work in high need schools (NASBE, 2000).

The targeted recruitment and selection of participants in this proposed TLSS program has established a foundation for recognizing the leadership potential in teachers, finding those with vested interests in the local community, and evaluating skills and predispositions relative to school leadership. This proposal gives district leadership a new set of tools to assess the capabilities and competencies of existing principals.

(9) Principals as Catalysts for Improvements in Teaching and Student Achievement : If

teachers are considered to be the most significant influence at school on the learning and growth of students, and if principals are considered to be the second most important school-based factor in student success, then it follows that the primary job of the principal would be to support teachers in their work. The recent history of education reform efforts has not produced significant change or effective policy. Reforms that

focus on standards, accountability, or leadership miss the mark if they ignore the process of teaching and learning in the classroom (Black and William, 1998; Marzano, 2005; Fullan, 2009). Changing the culture of a school or district includes capacity building, or the deployment of “any strategy that increases the collectiveness of a group to raise the bar and close the gap of student learning” (Fullan, 2006, p. 9).

(10) Even with excellent training and expertise, however, the effects of the school principal on student learning will be marginalized unless it is mediated through the works of others, primarily teachers (Hallinger and Heck, in Marzano, 2005). Their leadership will not be the cause but the catalyst for change (Leithwood et al., 2004) as they support the teachers in their charge and are supported themselves by a culture for success in the district and school communities. In the case of school leadership, articulation of learning goals and examination of student achievement of those goals need to be coupled with examination of “instructional quality, that is, *what the schools do* to help students achieve” (Fullan, p. 5).

(11) In the TLSS program, focus on instruction and improvements in teaching are supported by examining more effective use of and response to student achievement data. For over a decade, teachers and principals in the districts and around the state have been recipients of training in “data driven decision-making.” They are knowledgeable about the scoring and reporting of national, state, and local assessments. The intense focus on “looking at data,” however, has sometimes precluded the “Now what?” question. Teachers are poised to shift their learning to the best instructional responses to achievement data, and principals must lead in this effort. Additionally, under current



law, achievement measures have counted the sum of students proficient at each grade level. Less attention has been paid to the measure of “each student’s academic growth, regardless of the performance level at which they start” (Dillon, 2010). The focus on instructional improvement and student learning in the TLSS will stress the importance of responding to data with the most appropriate and effective teaching strategies for both individual students and subgroups in schools.

(12) A second issue related to using student achievement data, and one which is of particular importance to New Mexico schools, relates to the achievement gap reflected in test results. Principals must be able to “confront the effects that beliefs about race [and poverty] and achievement have on student performance and help teachers and students apply this knowledge to their day-to-day work” in classrooms (Childress, 2009, p. 17). Responding to student data will include examination of achievement gaps and ways in which instruction for both groups and individuals can be adjusted. Standards for underperforming groups can be raised only by changes that are put into direct effect because “learning is driven by what teachers and [students] do in the classroom” (Black and William, 1998).

(13) Systems Change and Impact: Capacity building is a skill and responsibility that not only devolves to the school principal, but is also instrumental in “lateral capacity building” in which schools learn from each other and districts learn from each other. Lateral capacity building requires multi-level efforts, going beyond the school and principal to include the community, the district and the state (Fullan, 2006). The strength of the UNM-NMSU-LCPS-NMSLI-WWNFF partnership ensures a high

potential for horizontal and lateral capacity building, including statewide impact.

**Project Evaluation (working with national researchers, including studies to measure program effectiveness)**

All data, both formative and summative, will be used to monitor program progress. A broad array of data will be collected throughout the term of the project to provide both formative and summative assessment of progress toward goals. Multiple methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, will be used for cross-checking and continuous improvement purposes. Appropriate data analysis techniques will be used for each kind of data: descriptive and comparative statistics for quantitative data and constant comparison, content analysis, and description for qualitative data. The TLSS evaluation plan requires that each partner contribute to an end-of-year report. The TLSS Program Manager will use these reports along with additional assessment data to prepare interim and final Department of Education Performance Reports. Reports will be shared among all Partners and stakeholders, and program adjustments will be made as indicated by the data.

The final element in evaluation will be a research study conducted by faculty from the UNM, NMSU, the Schools of Business, LCPS, and NMSLI. A longitudinal study will begin with the first cohort of Turnaround Aspiring Principals and provide valuable information regarding the on-going process of preparation and change theory implementation efforts by turnaround principals in high-need schools. The guiding research questions will be: (1) What impact do the program completers have on their school sites as a result of the TLSS experience?

(2) What effects do these principals have on the academic achievement of students? And (3) What is the ability of the Principal Insight and selection procedures to accurately identify highly capable turnaround candidates for the program?

### **Significance**

Contributions to the Field: Selecting and Preparing Highly Effective Principals: In recent years, societal trends have intersected to create a new and dramatic need in schools. Specifically, the pending retirement of aging teachers and administrators coupled with accountability requirements have exacerbated a shortage of high quality school leaders, especially those willing to serve as principals in low-performing schools. Aspiring principals will be engaged in a structured, purposeful study of strategies for improving teaching and learning. Limiting the turnaround cohort size will ensure appropriate district level support and foster the sharing of their best turnaround ideas and implementation strategies. With the built-in support structure of a Turnaround Coach and the small, but meaningful size of the cohort, the TLSS project aims to ensure that learning communities are strengthened and dramatic and meaningful student achievement gains realized at their school sites. Mentoring, professional development, and evaluation that measure learning results must become the norm for all New Mexico schools. Not only will the TLSS project expand professional learning and action to include turnaround success, but the project strengthens the district office structure and solidifies systemic improvement to support principal leadership development. The significance of the TLSS is that of its direct attention to improving selection, training, and supporting principals in order to improve their practice which will result in better instruction and greater gains in student achievement.

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